

# DEAR TRANS SURVIVORS

Housing for Transgender Survivors Zine



National LGBTQ Institute on  
Intimate Partner Violence

“We have  
the power  
to create  
our own  
reality.  
Dream it,  
Think It,  
Say It,  
Do It.”

TWIGGY PUCCI GARÇON

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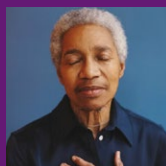
## → CONTENT WARNING

This zine will include language around violence, including interpersonal violence and its impact on transgender people.

## → PROJECT OVERVIEW

Safe and stable housing is **life-saving** for transgender survivors of interpersonal and familial violence, those rejected from family of origin, and those who live in communities and places where they are targeted for being who they are. For transgender survivors, safe housing is violence prevention and is about **autonomy, safety, dignity, healthcare, and the ability to thrive and be loved in community.**

This zine is a guide for transgender, gender nonconforming people, nonbinary people, gender fluid people, and other identities that are not assigned or understood at birth. This zine is also for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), state sanctioned violence, hate violence, family violence, and other survivors seeking safer housing resources and knowledge about legal housing protections. People who identify as immigrants, disabled/differently abled, sex workers, Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color are celebrated and encouraged to take up space in a world that is continually trying to systematically shrink their agency to create homes. Throughout this zine “trans/transgender survivors” will be the language used to represent this beautiful, powerful, intersectional community.



**BEVERLY  
GLENN-COPELAND**

“THE ONES AHEAD”

# ABOUT US

## → NATIONAL LGBTQ INSTITUTE ON IPV

Prioritizing culturally relevant and survivor-centered approaches in training, technical assistance, research, and policy advocacy, the Institute aims to strengthen national response to LGBTQ+ survivors of IPV and expand access to necessary supportive services. Visit our website at [lgbtqipvinstitute.org](http://lgbtqipvinstitute.org) to learn more about opportunities to join public trainings, request a custom workshop for your agency, or request tailored technical assistance.

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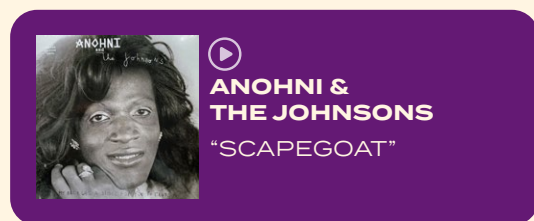
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## → INTRODUCTION

What does safer housing for transgender survivors look like during a time of heightened violence and state sanctioned discrimination in all aspects of our lives? How can we access emergency shelter and housing programs and know that we will be treated with safety and respect when institutions are being told we do not exist? We need—and deserve—affirming and inclusive spaces to heal and grow post abuse. Accessing transgender-inclusive services where we can thrive can be complex. It takes self-advocacy and word-of-mouth contacts to support our healing journey. This zine will provide guidance and pointers on safety considerations and what to do when seeking safer housing options.



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Select photos are from [Building Healthy Online Communities](#).

# HOUSING LANDSCAPE



## → HARD TRUTHS

- As reported by the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#), 1 in 5 transgender people in the U.S. have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.
- More than 1 in 10 transgender people who have experienced homelessness have lost their housing through the eviction process because of their gender identity.
- Discrimination, family rejection, migration, immigration, and interpersonal violence, and state violence can all contribute to homelessness and further victimization.

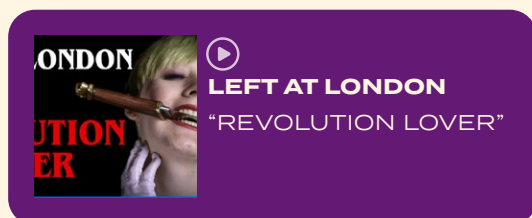
With the recent surge in anti-trans legislation and heightened transphobia, many transgender survivors fear that domestic violence shelters may not provide them with shelter and housing services. Even within programs that do offer housing, there is a clear need to implement more trans-inclusive practices. Transgender survivors report being discriminated against in shelter and housing programs by both staff and other program participants.

## → LEGAL PROTECTIONS

- Equal Access Rule (EAR) protections: Since 2012, the [Equal Access Rule](#) has prohibited discrimination in HUD-funded emergency shelter and housing programs based on “marriage status, sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI).”
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) protections: The Violence Against Women Act has prohibited discrimination based on SOGI status as well since 2013.

**In the current political landscape, anti-discrimination protections around SOGI are in jeopardy of being removed from federally funded housing programs, emergency shelters, victim services, fair housing enforcement, and more.** Most recently, proposed rules have sought to block federally funded access to gender-affirming health care for youth. As a result, children’s hospitals across the country have stopped providing such care. HUD currently recognizes only two sexes—male and female—in their data collection and shelter and housing funded programs under the false pretense of protecting women’s safety in domestic violence shelters.

What we know is that transgender, gender nonconfirming, and nonbinary people have always existed across time, continents, and cultures. We have been here forever! Even with federal policy changes, transgender survivors who seek safety and shelter deserve access to these services. In fact, there are still many local, state, and federal laws in place protecting our access to support.





# KNOW YOUR HOUSING RIGHTS

## → STATE OF HOUSING RIGHTS FOR TRANSGENDER SURVIVORS

Under VAWA, all survivors have the following rights, including LGBTQ+ survivors who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking (violence/abuse):

- **Cannot be denied admission to or assistance** under a HUD-subsidized or assisted housing unit or program because of the violence/abuse committed against them.
- **Cannot be evicted** from a HUD-subsidized unit **nor have their assistance terminated** because of the violence/abuse committed against them.
- Cannot be denied admission, evicted, or have their assistance terminated for **reasons related to the violence/abuse**. This includes having an eviction record, criminal history, or bad credit history.
- **Must have the option to stay** in their HUD-subsidized housing, even if there has been criminal activity directly related to the violence/abuse.
- **Can request an emergency transfer from the housing provider for safety reasons** related to the violence/abuse committed against them.
- **Must be allowed to move with continued assistance** if the survivor has a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher.
- **Must be allowed to self-certify to the housing provider** using the HUD VAWA Self-Certification ([Form HUD-5382](#)), and cannot be required to provide more proof unless the housing provider has conflicting information about the violence/abuse.
- **Must receive HUD's Notice of VAWA Housing Rights** ([Form HUD-5380](#)) and HUD's VAWA Self-Certification Form ([Form HUD-5382](#)) from the housing provider in specific instances: 1. When they are denied admission to a HUD-subsidized unit or HUD program, 2. When they are admitted to a HUD-subsidized unit or HUD program, and 3. When they receive a notice of eviction from a HUD-subsidized unit or notice of termination from a HUD program.
- **Has a right to strict confidentiality** regarding their status as a survivor.
- **Can request that** the owner or landlord remove the harm doer from the lease or unit. You might need to re-establish your eligibility for your housing and sign a new lease.
- **Cannot be coerced, intimidated, threatened, or retaliated against** by HUD-subsidized housing providers for seeking or exercising VAWA protections.
- **Has the right to seek law enforcement or emergency assistance** for themselves or others without being penalized by local laws or policies for these requests or because they were victims of criminal activity.

Similarly, Family Violence Prevention Services Act's (FVPSA) implementing regulations also [contain provisions](#) that prohibit anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination and affirm that people of all genders must have equal access to services. The National Housing Law Project publishes a [national compendium of state housing protections](#) for survivors that lists additional protections survivors are eligible for in their states. In addition to state protections, many local jurisdictions have housing protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, and tenant protections more broadly.

## → WHAT YOU CAN DO WHEN YOUR RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED

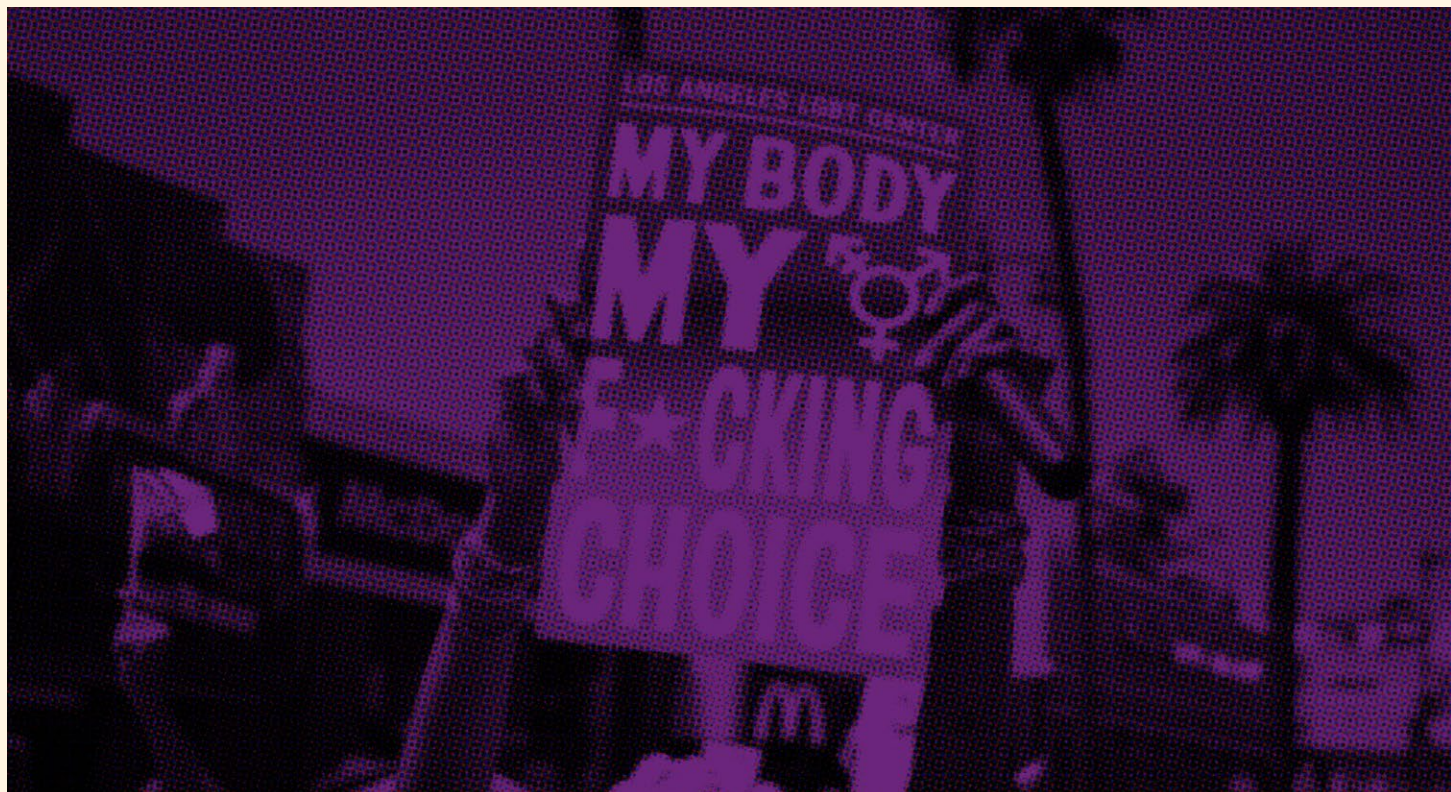
The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is still federal law, and that has not changed. VAWA provides housing protections for survivors. VAWA provides a pathway for survivors to [file a complaint to the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#) (FHEO) if they believe they have been discriminated against because of their survivor status. The process and timeline is uncertain and can vary. It can be helpful for LGBTQ+ survivors to work with a housing just lawyer or housing advocate with VAWA expertise prior to filing an FHEO complaint. Federal housing rights cover transgender survivors based on the Sexual and Gender Identity (SOGI) protections in VAWA, but there are concerns the FHEO might not process the complaint. Before making a decision to file, it would be beneficial to consult a professional in the field. There are resources on page 18-19 if you need to consult an advocate for support. Whether or not you choose to file a complaint is completely up to you. Filing in times of crisis can be difficult for some and affirming for others. Many states and local jurisdictions have human rights commissions where you can also file a complaint of housing discrimination for additional remedies with the lack of FHEO enforcement at the federal level. **There is no right or wrong way to be a survivor; prioritizing your safety and healing is what matters most.**



**SHEA DIAMOND**

"I AM AMERICA"

# HOUSING RIGHTS VS. REALITY



## → RIGHTS

Since 2012, the [Equal Access Rule](#) has prohibited discrimination in HUD-funded emergency shelter and housing programs based on “marriage status, sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI).” The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has also prohibited discrimination based on SOGI status since 2013.

VS.

## REALITY

The transgender community is currently experiencing rollbacks in protections impacting their interpersonal, familial, and community relationships, as well as in their ability to access non-profit and governmental services without fear of further harm. Anti-transgender rhetoric is gaining traction despite transgender people existing throughout documented history.

It is difficult to know where to turn or who to trust after experiencing harm by someone you love. Many shelters and programs are at capacity, and finding a place to go can be a challenge. All survivors have housing protections in place, and if you are discriminated against, contacting a housing advocate, legal aid or housing justice lawyer could provide support as you navigate the next steps that feel right to you.



**CHOLITA!**

“NO CONTROLES”



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT MAINSTREAM PROVIDERS

## → WHAT YOU DESERVE TO EXPERIENCE

Discovering a new definition of home metaphorically and physically is complicated. However, transgender people deserve to feel affirmed when trying to create a new home.

- You should be surrounded by people that make you feel seen and respected in your identity.
- You can find joy, stability, and reconnection within yourself through art, nature, exercise, dancing, writing, and more.
- You can connect with a mechanism of healing whether that is talk therapy, somatic therapy, support groups, or culturally-centered healing.
- You can find a short term housing option that helps you get back on your feet. This transitional space allows you time to process your emotions and reconnect with safety.
- You can connect with a survivor advocate who can support you in navigating your safety, connecting to resources, and understanding your holistic needs.
- You can find a space to stay long-term that feels safe, affirming, and truly your own.

## → BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES

While many communities have shelters and programs for people experiencing homelessness, these services are not always safe or accessible for transgender people. Healing happens when domestic and sexual violence programs and homeless shelters commit to inclusion. Programs where transgender survivors are believed and are allowed to truly be themselves can be life changing. No survivor should have to choose between their identity and their safety.

There are many common threads transgender survivors report from their experiences in mainstream programs:

- **Lack of Gender Inclusive Options:** Many shelters separate residents by gender but do not have policies that respect transgender identities. Transgender people are often denied access to the facility that aligns with their gender identity, forcing them into unsafe or traumatizing situations.
- **Identification Requirements:** Lack of legal ID matching your name or gender could prevent you from accessing services or shelter, depending on the program.
- **Discrimination and Harassment:** Staff or residents may subject transgender individuals to verbal abuse, misgendering, or physical violence. Fear of mistreatment often leads people to avoid shelters altogether.
- **Medical and Mental Health Gaps:** Many programs lack awareness of the recovery support needed following gender-affirming surgery. Patients often have complex medical needs after surgery and require privacy and attentive medical care for weeks to months afterward.
- **Lack of Privacy and Safety:** Group living environments often lack adequate privacy, and trans residents may have their belongings, medication, or documents stolen or destroyed.
- **Legal and Systemic Obstacles:** Transgender people without stable housing are disproportionately arrested, fined, or penalized due to survival behaviors—including sex work or sleeping outdoors—and they face discrimination when trying to re-enter employment or housing markets.

If available, you can request private or safer accommodations, or consider options other than congregate shelter if they are available and would make you feel safer. In gender-segregated projects, a program only needs to know what gender you identify. If you identify as nonbinary, you can tell the program the gender you prefer to be housed in or ask for private accommodations. You can self-identify; programs should not ask for additional “proof” of your gender identity.

# FRIENDS & FAMILY

When in a time of crisis after experiencing harm most LGBTQ+ people turn to friends, family, and chosen family for housing, support, or other resources. These existing models of care are necessary and powerful. Finding the right spaces to connect with after periods of abuse can be difficult, especially when in fight-or-flight mode.

## QUIZ:

### IS THIS THE BEST PERSON TO ASK FOR A PLACE TO STAY?

- ☐ Is this someone you can trust when going through difficult times?
- ☐ Have you reached out to them before during difficult times?
- ☐ Do they have the physical space to house you, whether it's an extra room or a couch?
- ☐ Have they offered their home to you or others before?
- ☐ Do they have experience living with other people?
- ☐ Do you have similar cleaning habits?
- ☐ Will they maintain your privacy and confidentiality?
- ☐ Is the location safe or unknown from your abusive partner?

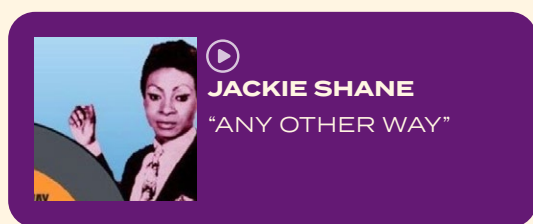
If you answered yes to most of these questions, then they are likely a good person to ask for assistance with housing. If not, consider asking someone else. If you do not have anyone else to ask, consider boundaries, guidelines, or negotiations to find sustainable co-habitation. Finding the right spaces to connect with after periods of abuse can be difficult, especially when in fight, flight, fawn, and/or freeze mode.

## HOW TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE SHORT-TERM CO-HABITATION, A.K.A. HOW TO COMFORTABLY COUCH SURF

- Before having conversations with someone else, it can be helpful to check in with yourself. What boundaries do you need to honor? What limitations do you need to set up first? If you have any mental or physical disabilities, be transparent about your capacities ahead of time. For example, this could look like not doing any cleaning that requires you to be in pain or discomfort, or needing an hour heads up if there will be other people in the home.
- Create a safety plan and let them know of any aspects that affect the home. If you are worried about your safety and confidentiality, you can request that they not tell anyone you are staying with them or that your belongings do not appear in any potential photos that will be posted/shared.
- It can be hard to find homeostasis in an unfamiliar setting, even if it's with somebody you trust. Many survivors feel guilt and shame for taking up space, but survivors deserve to live with abundance. Finding a level of reciprocity when staying in someone's home can sometimes help. This could look like:
  - Offering to support with childcare, household tasks, or care work.
  - Teaching them a new skill or art.
  - Making them something. This could look like knitting them a scarf, beading them a bracelet, crafting them something with clay, etc.
  - Offering a service that you are skilled in. For example, you could braid their hair, do their taxes, or drive them around.
  - Asking if they have any needs that you can support them with. Maybe they are looking for support by changing their wardrobe or reorganizing.
- Discuss boundaries early. When staying with someone it is important to be in agreement with your support, needs, and capacity. Knowing someone's expectations for cleanliness is a great way to start. Some other ideas to think about:
  - How often are they home? How often do you plan to be in this home?
  - Would they like help managing the home? Can you help by cleaning the bathroom or sweeping the floors?
  - How can you best communicate disagreements, concerns, or needs with one another?
- Discuss timeframes. In moments of crisis it can be hard to offer certainty to yourself let alone someone else. Be transparent about how long you plan to stay there even if that answer is you don't know. If you don't know what your future looks:
  - Ask if they have a limit for how long you can stay with them.
  - Instead of naming how long you can stay, try offering a check-in instead. Maybe in one week to one month you can have a better idea of your needs.
  - Ask if their boundaries and needs for co-habiting change if you stay for a week compared to a couple months.
  - If you land a job or financial assistance or support like SNAP food benefits, considering offer financial support or pitching in with food for the household.

## ➔ REFLECTIONS AS YOU SEEK A NEW HOME

- What would being safe in your home feel like?
- Who do you feel safe with?
- What makes you feel at home?
- What geographic location do you feel comfortable in? Is that your home state? Is there a city that feels aligned with your spirit? Is there a neighborhood with a community you can lean on?
- Is there a friend, hotline, or community organization that you can reach out to where you will feel supported fully?
- What people or spaces/places make you feel at home and at rest?
- How can I advocate for my housing rights to be respected? Who can I tap in for support?





# RESOURCES: BY AND FOR HOUSING

## → MUTUAL AID AND TRANSGENDER-LED HOUSING PROGRAMS

- Transgender-led safe houses and shelters have begun to pop up in many cities across the country. These safe houses and group living programs are designed to house and provide wrap-around support in a shared community as transgender survivors seek alternatives to mainstream programs. This is not new or unique—transgender communities have long created homes to offer support after being kicked out of toxic family situations, experiencing street violence, state violence, and/or intimate partner violence. Historically, in the African American Ballroom scene, leaders and elders have often provided homes that welcome young transgender members of the scene, offering a place to live and be their true selves.
- With social media and online fundraising platforms, it is also helpful to consider asking friends, family, and the extended community for donations to get back on your feet as you rebuild your life.

**Here are some examples** of transgender for and by housing programs and local LGBTQ+ programs to consider. This list is not exhaustive.

[TEF's Transitional Housing Program](#) is for trans and nonbinary individuals with housing specifically for trans women of color.

[The Network LaRed Pathways Housing program](#) provides safe and stable housing options for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and/or transgender (LGBTQ+) survivors of partner abuse.

[Bradley Angle Marsha's Folx program](#) is one of the only culturally specific domestic violence services program for the LGBTQ+ community in the entire state of Oregon, and they offer housing programming.

[Eastern PA Trans Equity Project](#) offers a housing grant application for flexible funding up to \$1,500.

[Trans Housing Coalition](#) in Atlanta serves individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness and identify as transgender, nonbinary, or gender non-confirming.

[The Transgender Housing Network](#) is a community driven mutual aid temporary housing resource network intended to connect transgender people in need with safe and supportive places to crash.

[Transcendence Care Network](#) is a care network responding to the trans humanitarian crisis by offering safer passage to trans people in crisis.

## MOVING TO SAFER PLACES

In addition to seeking interpersonal safety, community safety from unsafe political climates might also be something you are considering. Many states and jurisdictions still have housing protections, gender affirming health care, and transgender and LGBTQ+ rights in place. Moving to a safer home free from violence and to a state with inclusive policies is critical for access to health care, and improvements in mental, physical, and emotional health.

[Movement Advancement Project](#) is mapping access to gender affirming health care in the U.S.

[TransLash Relocation Guide](#) is a resource to help you navigate and understand the relocation process for transgender individuals and what to consider when seeking a safer haven.

[The Rainbow Railroad](#) helps LGBTQ+ people who face violence and oppression because of who they are and who they love get to a place of safety. They provide emergency relocation support, crisis response, and other forms of assistance.

[SAGE National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging](#) provides a “Navigating Relocation” guide for LGBTQ+ elders who are moving from state to state. LGBTQ+ communities have made important progress over the past several decades. But recently, there have been new laws and actions that take away rights.

## WHERE TO REACH OUT 24/7

### IPV-Specific

Anti-Violence Project [Home - Anti Violence Project](#). The Anti-Violence Project has a 24-hour English & Spanish hotline to call for free and confidential support: 212-714-1141

National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence [Home | National LGBTQ Institute on IPV](#)

National DV Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE  
[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

Ujima, The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, addresses the pervasive issues of sexual assault and domestic and community violence within the Black Community. [Home - Ujima - The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community](#)

Esperanza United does national work to mobilize Latinas and Latin@ communities to end gender-based violence [Home - Esperanza United](#)

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (APIGBV) is a culturally specific

national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian/Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

[Homepage - Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence Website](#)

Survivor Services at the Los Angeles LGBT Center [Survivor Services - Los Angeles LGBT Center](#)

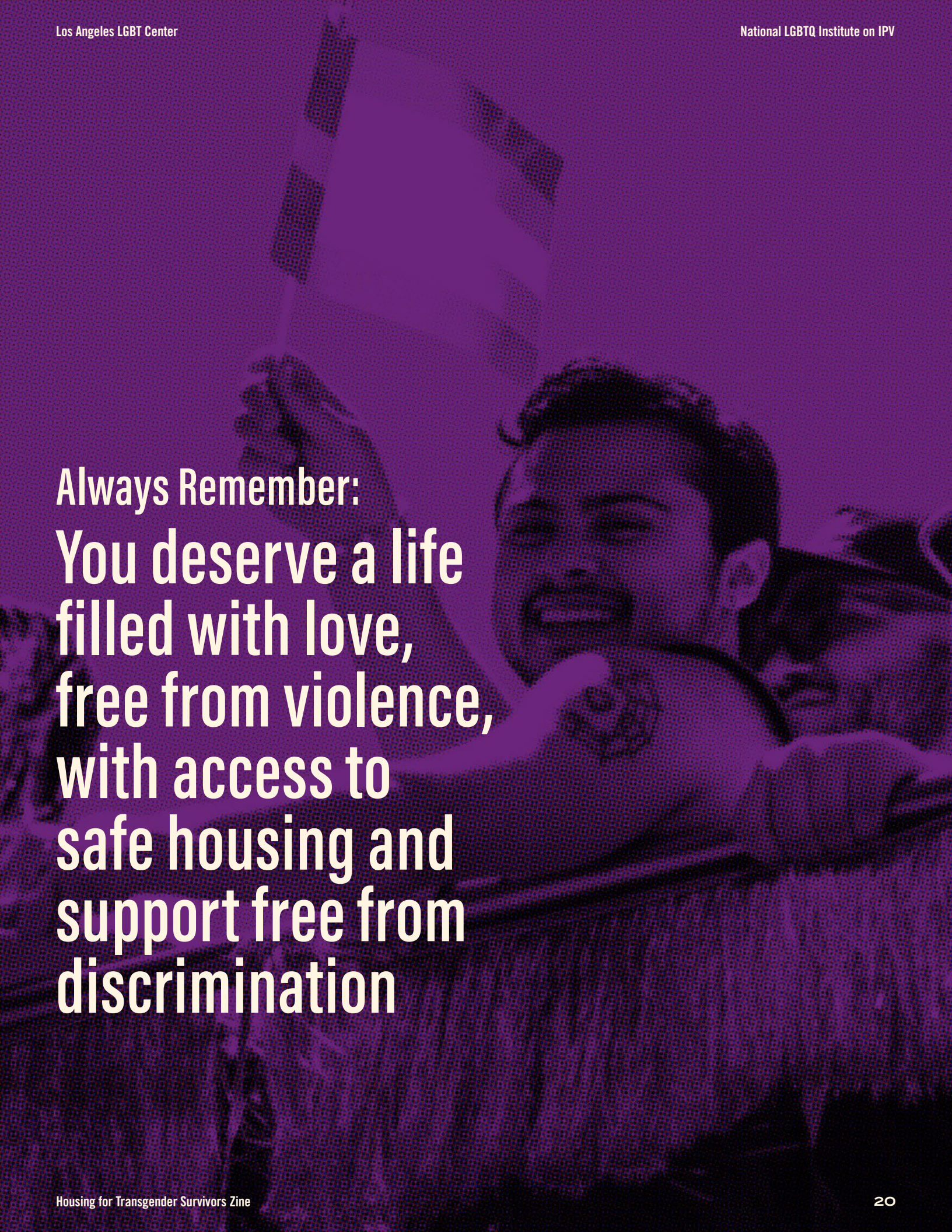
FORGE offers numerous resources for transgender survivors [Home - FORGE](#)

The Network LaRed (TNLR) [Home-TNLR](#)

### General LGBTQ Support

Trevor Project [The Trevor Project - Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

Oasis Legal Services offers low cost and free services for LGBTQ+ immigrants [Oasis Legal Services](#)



**Always Remember:  
You deserve a life  
filled with love,  
free from violence,  
with access to  
safe housing and  
support free from  
discrimination**

# PLAYLIST

# SOUNDTRACK

- Jackie Shane, “Any Other Way”
- Beverly Glenn-Copeland, “The Ones Ahead”
- Anohni & The Johnsons, “Scapegoat”
- Left at London, “Revolution Lover”
- Shea Diamond, “I Am America”
- Cholita!, “No Controles”
- SOPHIE, “It’s Ok To Cry”
- Sylvester, “Grateful”
- Dua Saleh, “Glow”
- Venus de Mars, “Take My Shoulders”
- Team Dresch, “One Song”